

§ 97.213 Failure to file statements.

If any party to a priority contest fails to file a preliminary statement, he or she shall be restricted to his or her earliest effective filing date.

§ 97.214 Access to preliminary statements.

The preliminary statements shall be open to the inspection of any party after the date set for the filing of preliminary statements (§ 97.207(b)), but shall not be open to inspection prior to that time.

§ 97.215 Dissolution at the request of the Commissioner.

If during a priority contest, information is submitted or found which, in the opinion of the Commissioner, may render the variety ineligible for a certificate, the priority contest may be suspended by the Commissioner and referred to an examiner for consideration of the matter. The parties will be notified of the reason for the suspension. Arguments of the parties regarding the suspension will be considered, if filed within 60 days of the notification. The suspension will then be continued, modified, or dismissed, in accordance with the determination by the Commissioner.

§ 97.216 Concession; abandonment.

(a) An applicant or a certificate holder involved in a priority contest may, at any time, file a written concession of priority, or abandonment of the certificate, signed by him or her. Upon the filing of such an instrument by any party, the decision shall be rendered against the interested party by the Commissioner.

(b) A concession of priority may not be made by an assignee of a part interest.

§ 97.217 Affidavits and exhibits.

Affidavits and exhibits, including official records and any special matter contained in a printed publication, pertinent to the issue involved in the contest, may be introduced as evidence in a priority contest by any party to the contest. In the case of official records and printed publications, the party introducing the evidence shall specify

the record or the printed publication, the page or pages to be used, indicate generally its relevancy, and submit to the Commissioner the record or authenticated copy, or the printed publication, or a copy. Copies of affidavits and exhibits, including any record or publication, shall be served by the Commissioner on each of the other interested parties.

§ 97.218 Matters considered in determining a priority.

In determining priority, the Commissioner will consider only priority of development based on the evidence submitted. Questions of novelty generally will not be considered in the decision on priority. The Commissioner may refer proposed findings of fact, conclusions, and notice of priority to the Board for an advisory decision.

§ 97.219 Recommendation by the Commissioner.

The Commissioner may, either before or concurrently with a decision on the question of priority, but independently of such decision, direct the attention of the examiner to any matter not relating to priority which may come to the Commissioner's attention, and which in his or her opinion establishes the fact that there has been an irregularity which amounts to a bar to the granting of a certificate to either of the parties. The Commissioner may suspend the priority contest and remand the case to the examiner for further consideration of the matters, to which attention has been directed.

§ 97.220 Decision by the Commissioner.

(a) When a priority contest is concluded on the basis of preliminary statements, or proposed findings of fact, conclusions and notice of priority shall be issued by the Commissioner to the interested parties, giving them a specified period, not less than 30 days, to show cause why such proposed findings of fact, conclusions, and notice of priority should not be made final. Any response made during the specified period will be considered by the Commissioner. Additional affidavits or exhibits

will not be considered, unless accompanied by a showing of good cause acceptable to the Commissioner. Thereafter, final findings of fact, conclusions, and notice of priority shall be issued by the Commissioner.

(b) The decision shall be entered by the Commissioner against a party whose preliminary statement alleges a date of determination later than the filing date of the other party's application.

§ 97.221 Status of claims of defeated applicant.

Whenever a final notice of priority has been issued by the Commissioner in a priority proceeding, and the time limit for an appeal from such decision has expired, the claim or claims constituting the issue of the priority stand finally disposed of without further action by the Commissioner.

§ 97.222 Second priority contest.

A second priority contest between the same parties shall not be entertained by the Commissioner for the same novel variety.

APPEAL TO THE SECRETARY

§ 97.300 Petition to the Secretary.

(a) Petition may be made to the Secretary from any final action of the Commissioner denying an application or refusing to allow a certificate to be issued, or from any adverse decision of the Commissioner made under §§ 97.18(c), 97.107, 97.201(e), and 97.220.

(b) Any such petition shall contain a statement of the facts involved and the point or points to be reviewed, and the actions requested.

(c) A petition to the Secretary shall be filed in duplicate and accompanied by the prescribed fee (see § 97.175).

(d) Upon request, an opportunity to present data, views, and arguments orally, in an informal manner or in a formal hearing, shall be given to interested persons. If a formal hearing is requested, the proceeding shall be conducted in accordance with the Rules of Practice Governing Formal Adjudicatory Proceedings Instituted by the Secretary Under Various Statutes set forth in §§ 1.130 through 1.151 of this title.

(e) Except as otherwise provided in the rules in this part, any such petition not filed within 60 days from the action complained of shall be dismissed as untimely.

[58 FR 42435, Aug. 9, 1993, as amended at 60 FR 8464, Feb. 14, 1995]

§ 97.301 Commissioner's answer.

(a) The Commissioner may, within such time as may be directed by the Secretary, furnish a written statement to the Secretary in answer to the appellant's petition, including such explanation of the reasons for the action as may be necessary and supplying a copy to the appellant.

(b) Within 20 days from the date of such answer, the appellant may file a reply statement directed only to such new points of argument as may be raised in the Commissioner's answer.

§ 97.302 Decision by the Secretary.

(a) The Secretary, after receiving the advice of the Board, may affirm or reverse the decision of the Commissioner, in whole or in part.

(b) Should the decision of the Secretary include an explicit statement that a certificate be allowed, based on an amended application, the applicant shall have the right to amend his or her application in conformity with such statement and such decision shall be binding on the Commissioner.

§ 97.303 Action following the decision.

(a) Copies of the decision of the Secretary shall be served upon the appellant and the Commissioner in the manner provided in § 97.403.

(b) When an appeal petition is dismissed, or when the time for appeal to the courts pursuant to the Act has expired and no such appeal or civil action has been filed, proceedings in the appeal shall be considered terminated as of the dismissal or expiration date, except in those cases in which the nature of the decision requires further action by the Commissioner. If the decision of the Secretary is appealed or a civil action has been filed pursuant to the Act, the decision of the Secretary will be